

**Problematizing early IE syndetic coordination:  
Ancient Greek ‘and’ from Homer to Thucydides**

Syndetic coordination in Ancient Greek is not uniform. In particular, conjunctions and particles whose meaning can be compared to ‘and’ display a high degree of variation in lexical choice, scope, function and meaning. Furthermore, crucial factors complicating the analysis of their occurrences include diachronical changes concerning frequencies, preferred patterns, and distinctions due to the characterization of literary genres (both in prose and in poetry).

The paper aims at problematizing some accounts and assumptions provided by Ancient Greek grammars as well as handbooks about Ancient Greek syntax. The sources inspiring such a problematization are recent works on clause-combining in a discourse perspective, semantic and pragmatic accounts of ‘and’ in English, forgotten literature on Ancient Greek particles (preceding Denniston), and comparative studies on coordination in early IE languages.

The lexical items that will be focused on are *de*, *te*, and *kai*. The literary texts where examples will come from span archaic to classical Greek, and will include five different genres, that is, epic, lyric, drama (tragedy and comedy), historiography, and oratory.

This and the following paragraphs are going to outline the argument and the questions that will be addressed. First, at the lexical level we can observe diachronical changes in terms of distribution and of collocations. A particularly striking fact that will be discussed, for example, regards the inverse balance of the most used connective particles Homer and in Thucydides, that is, *de* and *kai* respectively. While the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* show a relatively high amount of *de* and a relatively low amount of *kai* (1 *de* every 18,5 words, against 1 *kai* every 38,4 words on average), the *Histories* of Thucydides show exactly the opposite (1 *kai* every 15 words, against 1 *de* every 40 words). Another curious lexical fact concerns collocations involving these particles; instances of *kai te* (far less common than *te kai*), *de te*, *de kai* and *kai de* will be commented upon.

Second, at the syntactical level, some problems related to the question of scope will be raised. Why is “sentential” *te* (that is, single *te* having scope over an entire sentence) in Thucydides and in Herodotus very frequently used? More importantly, how does our appreciation of syndetic coordination change if we start considering the scope of particles and conjunctions beyond the sentence level, which means to consider multi-sentence discourse units? Another interesting phenomenon is linked to the so-called ‘postponed’ occurrences of

connective particles, such as, for example, *de* after vocative expressions (both in poetry and in prose). Do they indicate just exceptions to the rule? How do meter and modern punctuation affect our syntactical reading of *kai*? Finally, are there diachronical changes in the use of ‘apodotic’ instances of *kai* and *de*?

The most problematic classification of particles such as *kai* and *te* is the syntactically-driven dichotomy between connective and adverbial usages. How to qualify uses of *te* neither meaning ‘and’ nor indicating any digressive or permanent fact (as epic *te* is supposed to do, according to Ruijgh)? Most of all, how to account for the underestimated range of implications enriching *kai* already in archaic texts? *Kai* can be strongly asymmetrical, indeed, and it can mean something unrelated to ‘and’ as well as ‘also’/‘even.’

The latter points lead us to the third level of analysis, namely the semantic and pragmatic level. What is the semantics and pragmatics of *de* in light of its diachronical development, whose trend shows an overall decrease? How shall we read instances of *kai* formally instantiating “accidental” conjunctions, but actually marking conventional points of a certain kind of discourse (for example in lyric and in oratory)? What about *te* accompanying names of places and individuals even in classical historiography, where no “natural” conjunction is in question, and yet a deep sense of shared knowledge seems to be conveyed? Some closer analysis of the subtle ways in which archaic and classical Greek connect facts seems to deal with what the speaker wants to do. *de*, *te* and *kai* contribute to specify the communicative intention of the ongoing discourse act, which may include detailing, presenting, listing, marking narrative steps, juxtaposing attitudes towards facts, and adding evaluative comments. ‘And’-coordinators do not simply express covert coordination; they articulate the flow of discourse in many different ways, possibly reflecting traditional as well as innovative, intersubjective as well as subjective values.

A final consideration will regard the frequency of *de*, *te* and *kai* in texts presupposing a different degree of writtenness.

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